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Minutes of National Security Council Meeting
19 December 1961

With the President and Secretary Rusk in private conference, the Vice President asked Mr. Gilpatric to give his report on the Paris meeting. Lemnitzer spoke first of the general acceptance achieved for MC-96, the force goals for the next five years, superseding MC-70. He read a detailed involved report of the military discussions at Paris. He listed as two achievements of the conference, (1) the Norstad explanation of the atomic weapons picture for NATO planning and (2) the apparent decision of the Germans to participate more fully in NATO activities.

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Nitze commented on McNamara's report to the Council of Soviet ICBM capability and assessed U.S. superiority. The NATO members were impressed by this statement and particularly by McNamara's and Rusk's assurances in this context of the depth of U.S. commitment to NATO. Nitze went on to report some of the difficulties of the meeting,

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Nitze informed the U.K. representative that the United States would not be able to take over British commitments in such places as Aden, Singapore, and so forth, if the U.K. moved out.

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Mr. Rusk referred again in Paris to the President's offer in Ottawa to provide Polaris submarines to NATO. He asked for consultation with the representatives of any countries interested in this proposal.

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The President entered the Council meeting and was informed of the reports just presented. He then turned to the subject of utilization of Reserve Forces in the current crisis. He noted the hearings which will begin early next year and suggested that the interval be utilized for developing positions and arguments in support of our actions. He felt that the use of the Reserves should be defended vigorously, that the number of complaints and perhaps hardships were minor in regard to the whole operation and that under these circumstances he anticipated no difficulty in the presentation of a case. General Taylor added that the use of the Reserves in the current crisis follows a principal justification for the existence of Reserve Forces. Taylor went on to say that the increase of the Regular Establishment to 16 divisions would permit the achievement of a truly effective force for the long term run and the interim utilization of the Reserves in this particular scheme will have given the United States more strength than originally contemplated.

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Mr. Dillon reported that approximately half of the NATO finance ministers were present at the meeting and that the principal agreement related to the International Monetary Fund.

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Mr. Dillon received a report that General De Gaulle was well pleased about this achievement. The President suggested that Mr. Rusk prepare a letter to De Gaulle expressing particular satisfaction also with the agreement. Mr. Murrow requested permission to release the President's letter but the President suggested deferment since it would appear that he would be taking unnecessary advantage of De Gaulle.

The President spoke of the status of negotiations with the Soviet and expressed somewhat pessimistically his feeling that our efforts to negotiate with the Soviets will be unsuccessful. He felt a treaty would then be signed and the troubles would begin with East Germany not only on the principal issue of recognition but also on the incidental harrassments. The President asked for a release of a statement on Latin America and also on the Dominican Republic. He felt it quite timely to release the latter one in order that it might have some effect on moving the Dominican situation toward a climax. The President

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directed Mr. Rusk to work out a plan of action if the Congo talks fail. The plan should also include proposed press statements. While speaking of the press the President questioned the handling of the press in Paris and added that he felt it was not very well done. Mr. Rusk concurred and admitted that there had perhaps been a breach of security and certainly one of confidence by

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The President departed and Mr. Rusk began a discussion of the unwillingness of the French to negotiate with the Soviet Union at the present time. The French thus far have failed to accept the logic of the U.S. position. Rusk perceives in De Gaulle a feeling of weakness rather than the generally conceded position of strength, particularly because of the precarious political position of De Gaulle. In this sense Rusk feels that the United States has previously underestimated the depth of De Gaulle's truculence. The one action that Rusk reported from the Paris meeting was the decision to proceed with the Thompson-Gromyko talks.

Rusk discussed with NATO Council members individually the Cuban matter and asked each representative to review the situation in the near future. Rusk concluded with a pessimistic remark on the achievements of the meeting and observed that perhaps the Congo situation tended to reduce its chances for success.

Lemnitzer reported certain details of the meeting which he and Secretary McNamara had at Honolulu with Nolting, McGarr and Felt. He termed the meeting very successful. (He did not mention Secretary McNamara's principal statement at the meeting to the effect that the United States had made the decision to pursue the Viet Nam affair with vigor and that all reasonable amounts of resources could be placed at the disposal of the commanders in the area.)

Rusk reviewed briefly his meeting with Franco. He was particularly concerned by certain press reports which were somewhat critical of the U.S. association with the Spanish monarch. Rusk feels that the United States should make no apology and that continued association with Franco should be wholeheartedly pursued. He noted that a great amount of work has been and is being done on the transfer of power at the conclusion of Franco's tenure.

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